

Amendment to the Specification:

Please insert the following paragraph on page 1 after the TITLE:

-- CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS

This application is a continuation-in-part of co-pending U.S. application serial number 10/611,769 filed on July 1, 2003 and claims priority to international application no. PCT/US 04/023032 filed on June 28, 2004. --

Please delete the paragraph starting on page 8, line 26 to page 9 line 2, and replace with the following amended paragraph:

--Although fibers 14 are initially arranged in a generally planar pattern in face layer 12 as illustrated in Fig. 5, a portion of fibers 14 are needle punched or hydraulically needled (spunlaced) toward bottom surface 18 as illustrated in Fig. 6. When mechanical needle punching is used, the needling density is at least over 500 penetrations per square inch [[(ppi)]] (ppsi) and preferably over 1,000 [[(ppi)]] ppsi. The web of fibers 14 is needled from top surface 16 with a relatively large number of needle penetrations per unit area. Generally, the needle punch density is from about 250 needles/in² to about 2000 needles/in². In one embodiment, web 14 has a needle punch density of at least about 250 needles/in². Alternatively, the needle punch density is at least about 500 needles/in². Preferably, the needle punch density is at least 1000 needles/in².--